

SYNOPSIS

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"THE MAN FROM BEYOND"

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original story by

HARRY HOUDINI

Directed by Burton King

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Adapted for the screen by Collidge Streeter

Dr. Gregory Sinclair, scientist and explorer, and his companion, Francois Duval, half-breed soldier of fortune, sole survivors of a scientific expedition to the Arctics, struggle against exhaustion and starvation to reach civilization. The struggle is too much for Dr. Sinclair and he cries out that he cannot go on. Duval leaves him to die but retraces his steps when he sights the distant outlines of a ship frozen in the ice, restoring his hope of finding food.

Reaching the vessel and climbing aboard the two are confronted with the gruesome sight of a figure, stark and stiff, standing upright in a tomb of ice which has formed at the base of the mast. Seeking an answer to the uncanny mystery the two go to the cabin below where Dr. Sinclair finds a portion of the log and an unmailed letter written by the first mate, Howard Hillary, indicating that the vessel was wrecked one hundred years before at a point a thousand miles from its present position. The scientific instinct in Dr. Sinclair is aroused at this discovery and he impressively conveys his information to Duval. Duval, however, is concerned only with the question of securing food, and finding none in the cabin, makes his way to the deck. The frozen figure draws him and

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chopping away the ice he releases the frozen prisoner and drags him below.

The scientific Sinclair declares that the flesh is so marvelously preserved that it looks as if the frozen man is asleep rather than dead. They are contemplating the figure, Sinclair with scientific attention, Duval with avid eyes, when the eyes of the frozen man are seen to move, indicating that the man is not dead but has been living in a state of suspended animation. Sinclair, forgetting his hunder, makes frantic efforts to resuscitate his find, while the unimaginative Duval continues his search for food. Finding food and drink Duval returns to aid Dr. Sinclair. He points to a scar on the man's forehead and ventures the opinion that the blow must have been struck but recently. Dr. Sinclair answers in the negative and ruminatively declares that the man will wake with the very thought that possessed his mind when the blow was struck a century before.

True to Dr. Sinclair's declaration, the man, immediately upon reviving, shouts the name "Felice" and demands to know what has become of her. Before he can be restrained the man dashes from the cabin and across the ice fields, followed by Dr. Sinclair and Duval, who recapture him, and assure him they will help him find his Felice.

Three long weary months of groping through the Arctic night bring them back to civilization. Dr. Sinclair, takes the man to the home of his brother-in-law, Dr. Crawford Strange, to keep him under a period of police but nevertheless careful observation.

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They arrive--Dr. Sinclair, Duval and the "man from beyond" -- just as the wedding of Dr. Sinclair's niece, Felice Strange, to Dr. Gilbert Trent, is begun. The man wanders into the ballroom where the wedding is being held and gazes about until his eyes fall upon Felice. He is held as if fascinated and then, pushing aside all restraint, shouts out the name "Felice" and rushes toward the girl, interrupting the ceremony. Strong hands attempt to overpower him but Felice Strange bids them release him that he may explain himself. Dr. Trent, angered at the interruption, telephones for the police and for the insane asylum attendants.

The man explains that he is Howard Hillary and asks the girl if he is so altered in appearance that she does not recognize him. She answers that she is sure they have never met. Hillary asks her if she does not remember the early days of their voyage -- how they played chess in the cabin -- and how he courted her. To refresh her memory, as he believes, he relates how the captain of the barkentine had tried to humiliate him, causing a fight which resulted in his being made a prisoner below. He recalls the accident to the vessel and how he had freed himself and after seeing her safely placed in a life-boat had gone to save her father, only to run afoul the captain, after which he was left with but memories of a girl crying out to him to save her father.

The police and asylum attendants arrive and Hillary is carried off. Dr. Sinclair quiets the guests by announcing that it is all a mistake and that he will have Hillary released in twenty-four hours. Dr. Trent requests Felice Strange to

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continue the ceremony but she first asks Dr. Sinclair of the whereabouts of her father, who had left as one of the members of the expedition. Dr. Sinclair, greatly surprised at the question, informs her that her father did not go on the expedition -- that he had received a wire from Dr. Trent to return immediately on account of her (Felice's) illness. Felice cries out that she was not ill and that her father did not come home. She looks to Dr. Trent for enlightenment but he answers that men sometimes choose to drop out of sight when involved with some member of the opposite sex. Felice brands his answer as a lie and refuses to go on with the ceremony when he requests her to do so, and the guests are dismissed.

The unexpected return of Dr. Sinclair and the interrupted wedding place Trent, who has misappropriated the Strange estate, in a position that calls for immediate action, and with a definite plan in view, he takes charge of the susceptible Duval. Meanwhile Hillary has been taken to the asylum and wrapped up in sheets, over which water is poured, to prevent his escape. Felice Strange, guided by woman's intuition, goes to the asylum to see Hillary. When the guards open the padded cell they find their prisoner gone.

Carrying out his plan to out-wit fate, Dr. Trent takes Duval to Marie LeGrande, the master mind who guides him in his nefarious schemes. Duval is as a child in Marie's hands and falls readily into the pit dug for him.

As the hours sweep by the disappearance of Dr. Strange grows in mystery. Dr. Trent, however, holds the key to the mystery, for in the cellar of his home, which adjoins the Strange

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estate, he keeps the missing man a chained prisoner -- a broken man whose only companion is a rat brought for experimental purposes. Dr. Trent, having obtained possession of the Strange estate by duplicity, covets the sleeping sickness cure discovered by Dr. Strange, and offers his prisoner life and freedom for the formula. Dr. Strange's pleas for mercy are in vain.

Hillary, believed by Dr. Trent to be confined to the asylum, suddenly appears at the window of Felice's room, knocks and is admitted. She explains that she had called at the asylum. Hillary relates how he escaped. She is interested in this stranger and asks him the name of the girl he had loved. He replies that it was Felice Norcross, and to another question, answers that the last time he had seen her was in the fall of 1820 -- almost a year before, he adds. The girl brings a newspaper and shows him the date -- 1921, and adds that Dr. Sinclair calls him the man from beyond. As Hillary hears this there comes to him the crushing realization that while time has stood still for him it had swept away everyone who was near and dear and that the girl before him is a total stranger. The girl comforts him and informs him that she had counted on his help in locating her father who disappeared so mysteriously. Thus the same voice, the same appeal he had heard when the vessel was sinking, again rang in his ears and vibrated his soul, taking him back a century of time. He explains that it is strange that always in his dreams she was asking him to save her father from danger, but that some power held him fast. She asks how this is possible when they have been strangers, and to this he replies that some instinct, too subtle to explain,

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tells him that they are not strangers. The girl suggests that if she is the girl he says he is and if he loves her he must find her father. Hillary repeats that he does love her and vows to find her father. Meanwhile, Dr. Trent continues in his efforts to break down Dr. Strange and force him to give up the sleeping-sickness cure.

Deeply moved by what she had heard from Hillary's lips, Felice goes to Dr. Sinclair and asks him if he has heard of anyone named Felice Norcross. He answers that her great-grandmother's name was Norcross; that this ancestor had a sister, Felice, who was lost at sea. The light begins to dawn upon Felice and she asks Dr. Sinclair if he believes that Felice Norcross or anyone who had died could ever come back to earth again. Dr. Sinclair explains that such is the theory of reincarnation -- that a soul that passes out before it has gained its heart's desire feels the earth-call and must come back and work out its destiny. These answers give Felice food for further thought.

Dr. Trent, still concerned with his plans, spends part of his time in Dr. Strange's laboratory to make it appear that he expects his former colleague to return. To Marie LeGrande, who visits him, he confides that he expects Hillary will cause him trouble. Marie instructs him to settle the matter at once by calling Hillary, Felice and Dr. Sinclair to the laboratory. Dr. Trent does as instructed. He also telephones for two detectives.

When all have arrived, Dr. Trent asserts that he has good reason to believe that Dr. Strange met with foul play. After a series of innuendos he pointedly accuses Dr. Sinclair of murdering the missing man. For verification of his story, Francis Duval is

called. Duval hesitatingly confirms Dr. Trent's accusation. Dr. Sinclair is taken in charge by the detectives. Hillary and Duval follow them as they proceed to headquarters. On their way they pass the city jail. The sight of it has its effect upon Duval and he recants. To the detectives he confesses that Dr. Sinclair was the victim of Dr. Trent's and Marie LeGrande's machinations. Dr. Sinclair is released. Hillary takes him with him on the search for the missing man.

Dr. Trent, still attempting to break the spirit of Dr. Strange, threatens to inoculate Felice with the germs of the sleeping sickness. Thereupon Dr. Strange agrees to give up his secret formula but finds that he cannot recall it. He pleads for mercy but Dr. Trent brushes him aside and starts for the Strange home.

Hillary, with Dr. Sinclair, arrives at the Trent home, steal their way in, and in passing through the hall see a rat drop a piece of cloth at the foot of a flight of stairs. Hillary picks up the cloth and finds upon it Dr. Strange's initials. The rat has been used as a message bearer. In picking up the cloth Hillary found it caught on a sharp edge of the stairs, which was made to swing up and down. Satisfied that they are on the proper clue, Hillary, with Sinclair, lifts up the stairs. They creep to the cellar and finally discover Dr. Strange, who urges Hillary to hurry if Felice is to be saved. He explains that Dr. Trent has threatened to inoculate the girl with the germs of the sleeping sickness.

Dr. Trent, meanwhile, has proceeded to make good his threat. He kidnaps Felice with the aid of a treacherous

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chauffeur, and takes her to the laboratory. Hillary hurries to the laboratory and bursts in in time to prevent Felice's inoculation. A fight ensues between Hillary and Dr. Trent. Tony, the chauffeur, comes to Dr. Trent's rescue. They render Hillary unconscious. In the excitement Felice escapes. Tony pursues her. Meanwhile Hillary revives and resumes his fight with Trent. The two burst through a door and roll down a hill where the fight is continued until Dr. Trent is hurled by Hillary over a precipice.

Hillary, relaxing for a moment from his exertions, gazes about to suddenly discover Felice fleeing before Tony. Galvanized into action he starts in pursuit. Felice makes her way to the Niagara rapids, where she jumps into a canoe. Tony stops spell-bound. Hillary, realizing that unless he can stop the canoe Felice will be hurled over the falls, sheds his coat, rushes to the rapids and plunges in. Down the rapids the canoe carrying Felice speeds on. After her comes Hillary, the rapids shooting him along in the face of terrifying danger. Whirlpools draw him under and he fights the fight of fights to carry on. Closer to the brink of Niagara Falls goes Felice in the canoe -- and after her Hillary. The roar of the Falls is in her ears -- and his. Hillary fights to reach the canoe. His fingers clutch its side. Ever fighting the current he sets himself against a protruding rock. He makes one last supreme effort and the course of the canoe is stayed. Felice is saved. Doggedly he carries her out of the water to the

bank where he revives her.

The next day there is a reunion at the Strange home between Felice, Dr. Strange and Dr. Sinclair. Hillary is also present. Hillary is thinking of the last day's events when Felice appears. Dr. Sinclair, standing in the offing with Dr. Strange, watches them and wonders that Hillary would cling tenaciously to his theory that he and Felice loved each other in former life. Dr. Strange answers that their personal beliefs are of no importance, since the great teachers of the earth--Zoroaster down to Moses and Christ -- those who have made civilization possible, have taught the immortality and progression of the soul - reincarnation.

Hillary asks Felice if she doesn't feel that their love is too wonderful a thing to end -- that it must have been before and will be again, to which Felice answers that even as he speaks it is as if a small voice were whispering that it is true and that she must believe.

As Hillary looks fondly into her eyes and takes her into his arms it seems to him that he sees the spirit of Felice Norcross entering the body of Felice Strange.

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